

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 VIENTI 00228 131221Z

43 41

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SNM-02 AGR-05 AID-05 NSC-05 SS-15 INR-07

RSC-01 DEAE-00 /051 W

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R 131126Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2084

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

S E C R E T VIENTIANE 0228

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SNAR, LA

SUBJECT: NARCOTICS - CROP SUBSTITUTION

1. AT LUNCH WITH THE PRIME MINISTER AND PRINCE SOUPHANOUVONG TODAY, THE PROBLEMS OF FINDING A SUBSTITUTE FOR OPIUM WERE DISCUSSED. THE PRIME MINISTER INTRODUCED THE SUBJECT WHEN POTATOES THE SIZE OF MARBLES WERE SERVED. AS THE DEPARTMENT WILL RECALL, SOUVANNA IS A POTATO BUG AND BELIEVES THAT POPPY GROWERS WILL HAPPILY SWITCH TO POTATOES IF THE U.S. WILL ONLY PROVIDE THE SEED POTATOES. I COMMENTED AS I HAVE BEFORE THAT THE ONLY WAY THE MOUNTAIN TRIBES WILL EVER GET ANYTHING LIKE THE KICK THEY DO OUT OF OPIUM FROM POTATOES IS IF A U.S. POTATO PROJECT IS LINKED WITH A SOVIET VODKA DISTILLERY PROJECT WHICH SO FAR I FIND THE SOVIET EMBASSY UNWILLING TO CONSIDER.

2. SOUPHANOUVONG, WHOSE PATHET LAO COHORTS CONTINUE TO VILIFY VIENTIANE AND U.S. ATTEMPTS TO CURB POPPY GROWING, AGREED THAT POTATOES WERE NOT THE SOLUTION. HE AGREED WITH ME THAT THE ANSWER MIGHT BE IN GINSENG OR SOME SIMILAR EXOTIC MEDICINAL PLANT. TO MY SURPRISE, SOUPHANOUVONG APPEARED TO UNDERSTAND PERFECTLY THE REASONS FOR WHICH WE ARE SEEKING TO LIMIT POPPY-GROWING IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD.

WHITEHOUSE

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NNN

Message Attributes

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